



Health topic of the month

Sun Safety

Don't Get Burned! How to Protect Your Body From Sun Damage



Sunburn doesn't just cause pain and redness. It can also have immediate dangers and long-term effects. Learn the risks and find out how to protect yourself.

Between the beach, the pool and the weekend cookouts, you may be having too much fun to worry about sunburn – until that telltale stinging and redness set in. Sunburn isn't just painful – it's also bad for your health.

The dangers of sunburn

The sun's rays contain two types of ultraviolet light. Ultraviolet A (UVA) causes tanning, aging skin and wrinkles. Ultraviolet B (UVB) causes sunburn. Both can cause skin cancer. You can burn on sunny days, cloudy days and cold days. The white sand on the beach and the white snow of winter both reflect the sun's rays. You can burn whether you're skiing on water or snow.

Signs of sunburn are redness and pain. You may also have swelling and blistering. Get medical attention right away if you have a severe burn that covers your body, or if you have chills, vomiting, an upset stomach or confusion.

Long-term effects

Every time you tan or burn, DNA damage builds up in the deeper levels of your skin. Having five or more burns over a lifetime – even in childhood – doubles your chances of getting skin cancer.

Other side effects of tanning and burning include premature wrinkles and age (pigment) spots. Over time, the sun can age your skin, making it tough and leathery.

Remember that your eyes can burn, too. Too much sun can burn your corneas and lead to various eye diseases, including cataracts and age-related macular degeneration. It can even cause blindness.

The truth about sunscreen

Wearing sunscreen doesn't always keep you from burning. No sunscreen can completely protect you from UV rays.

A sunscreen labeled "waterproof" or "water resistant" will not protect you all day. When you swim or sweat, reapply your sunscreen. Waterproof sunscreens last about 80 minutes in the water. Those labeled "water resistant" last about 40 minutes.

The UV index

Your local news may broadcast daily heat index reports. The higher the index, the less time it will take to burn. Here is your risk for overexposure to the damaging UV rays. The number indicates the daily UV index, followed by the degree of risk. The higher the index on a given day, the greater the need to protect yourself.

- 0–2: low
- 3–4: moderate
- 5–6: high
- 7–10: very high
- 11+: extreme





Preventing sunburn

Follow these prevention tips:

- **Use only water-resistant or waterproof sunscreen.** It should protect against both UVA and UVB rays and have an SPF of at least 15. Reapply every two hours and after swimming or sweating.
- **Wear protective clothing when possible.** Always include a hat and sunglasses.
- **Limit sun exposure between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m.** This is when UV rays are strongest. If your shadow is shorter than you are, get out of the sun.
- **Keep children in the shade and in protective clothing.** If shade or protective clothing are not available, apply a minimal amount of sunscreen with at least an SPF of 15 to small areas like the cheeks and backs of the hands. If a child under age 1 gets sunburn, apply cool compresses and call your pediatrician right away. Also call if an older child has a sunburn with fever, blistering, severe pain or lethargy.
- **Be aware that water, snow and sand all reflect UV rays** and increase your chances for sunburn.

Treatment

Cool wet compresses, lotions and baths may help relieve sunburn pain. For serious burns, call your doctor. Medication may prevent infection and help with the swelling and pain.



**For more information, visit our
Web site at www.HealthyAtCOLA.com.**

Source: myOptumHealth

Entire article presented in this flier was written by Diane Griffith in 2008, contributing writer at myOptumHealth. OptumHealth Care Solutions is a subsidiary of UnitedHealth Group. Content sources include: Skin Cancer Foundation, *Preventing & treating sunburn*; Environmental Protection Agency, *SunWise Program*; Sun Safety Alliance, *How fast can you sunburn?*; American Academy of Dermatology, *The sun & your skin*.

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